

AROUND THE CORPS IN BRIEF

Combat engineers sharpen Marine skills

CAMP HANSEN, Okinawa, Japan -- On the battlefields of the modern world, combat engineers are expected to search for mines, build bridges, and assist ground forces in overcoming natural and man-made obstacles. However, Marines with 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 3rd Force Service Support Group, switched roles April 30, by leaving their tools in storage and picking up rifles, machine guns and grenades.

More than 120 Marines with 9th ESB took part in a combat endurance challenge at Camp Hansen.

During the challenge, the Marines were tasked with running a five-kilometer course garbed in camouflage utilities, helmets, flak jackets, and load bearing vests, while carrying either an M16A2 service rifle or an M240G medium machine gun.


"The course encompasses a lot of things these Marines are required to do for annual training," said Master Sgt. David W. Prutz, training chief. "These Marines will be tested in the fields of basic marksmanship, nuclear, biological and chemical defense, physical fitness, ethics and troop leadership."

The Marines were broken down into teams of six with at least 20 Marines per team. Each team carried two machine guns and started their trek at a running pace to various firing ranges.

The teams were tasked to achieve their battle sight zero (BZO) on their rifles at the first range they arrived at. Another kilometer up the path, the teams took part in a live-fire exercise where the machine gun teams practiced firing at multiple targets. Once they finished with the machine gun exercise, the Marines ran to their final range of the course where they each took turns throwing grenades.

The final leg of the course required the Marines to run to the gas chamber where they conducted their annual NBC training.

Eyeing the enemy ...



MCB CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – Lance Cpl. Benjamin L. Putnam, gunner with 3rd Bn., 5th Marine Regiment, sights-in and puts rounds downrange while Lance Cpl. Justin G. Ross, gunner with 3/5 serves as the assistant gunner. The Camp Pendleton Marines spent 11 days at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif.

President thanks service members

WASHINGTON -- President George W. Bush used his weekly national radio address to applaud the efforts of service members on Armed Forces Day.

The president credited the U.S. military with keeping terrorists across the world on the run, helping the people of Afghanistan and Iraq to build democratic societies, and making America more secure during his address Sunday.

"By their example, the people of

those countries and of the countries around the world are coming to know that freedom is the answer to hopelessness and terror," he said. "Our servicemen and women are defending America with unselfish courage, and their achievements have brought pride and credit to this nation."

Bush commented again on the Iraqi detainee abuse issue by noting, "all Americans know that the actions of a few do not reflect the true character of the United States armed forces. Our country has great respect for the Iraqi

people, and we are determined to expose and punish the abuse of Iraqi detainees."

The president updated what the U.S. military is doing in Iraq. He noted that in and around Fallujah, U.S. Marines are conducting joint patrols with local Iraqis to "take back the city from Saddam loyalists and foreign fighters and other militants."

Meanwhile, the president vowed that the United States will continue to work with Iraqi leaders to build a free, democratic and independent government.

Battalion honors Marine killed in action

CAMP HURRICANE POINT, Iraq -- Lance Cpl. Jeremiah E. Savage, gunner with 81 mm Mortar Platoon, Mobile Assault Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, couldn't wait to get home to meet his newborn son.

However, at the age of 21, he was struck down by an improvised explosive device May 12 during a routine patrol through the streets of Ramadi.

Marines from his unit gathered here Saturday to pay homage to the Livingston, Tenn., leatherneck during an afternoon memorial ceremony.

"On Wednesday afternoon, Lance Cpl. Savage was doing the very thing we came here to do: help Iraq," said Capt. Robert S. Weiler, company commander. "We had just visited a water treatment plant so that the people there could get more than one hour of drinking water a day. Then we handed out Frisbees and soccer balls to the children and put smiles on their faces, which was something Savage loved to do."

Weiler said Savage, father of five, was the epitome of the 1st Marine Division's "no better friend, no worse enemy" motto.

During five intense street fights April 6, 7 and 10, Savage proved his mettle. He helped his platoon quell violence between Marines from 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment and anti-coalition fighters.

Savage's best friend, 22-year-old Lance Cpl. David R. Dahl, met him more than three years ago at boot camp.

"He was a brother to me," Dahl said. "He cared about everybody. He had the biggest heart of anyone I know."

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because they slow the absorption of water from the stomach.

Sergeant Edward Powers, H&SBn. Marine Corps Martial Arts instructor, said Marines should have an increased awareness of self-hydration at all times. Drinking water before, after and during "many of the physical activities can assure a less significant chance of suffering a heat injury.

"Individuals should always drink water and be observant of symptoms of a heat injury," added Haywood, who warns Marines that they must adjust the intensity of their training when the temperature and humidity are high.


One of the key steps that is taken in order to inform Depot personnel of the risk of temperature increases includes the Depot's flag system, where different colored flags represent a different range of temperatures. The following is a brief explanation of flag conditions and what they mean:

- Green Flag, flown through a range of 75-84.9 heat index factor, has no effect on training.

- Yellow Flag, flown through a range of 85-87.9 heat index factor, requires the ceasing of all strenuous activity for unacclimatized personnel, including but not limited to, closed order drill and physical training. Cancel outdoor classes in the sun, or move them indoors under shade.
- Red Flag, flown through a range of 88-89.9 heat index factor, requires the ceasing of all physical training and strenuous activity for all personnel not thoroughly acclimatized through living and training at Parris Island for at least 12 weeks.
- Black Flag, flown through temperatures above 90 degrees, requires the ceasing of all strenuous activity in unit formations. Individual permanent personnel who have acclimatized may continue individual PT. Recruits may never conduct PT during Black Flag.
- Administrative Black Flag Condition exists when the Branch Medical Clinic reaches its maximum treatment capacity for heat casualties, regardless of heat indices.

For more information on heat causality awareness, contact your battalion S-3 office or the BMC at 228-3177.

Passing the torch ...



New Naval Dental Center Officer-in-Charge Capt. Steven R. Clark (right) and former Officer-in-Charge Capt. George R. Hull (center), salute Brig. Gen. Joseph J. McMEnamin, MCRD/ERR commanding general, on stage during a change-of-command ceremony at the Lyceum May 14.

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of the tax center.

"In the past, I went in a lot of times, and I felt like some of the people didn't know what they were talking about," said Sgt. David Matthews, a Basic Warrior Training and Crucible instructor, who served as a member of the Tax Center team. "That changed this year. If we didn't know something, we asked Master Sergeant Wilson. He always knew the answer to every question we asked. He would show us as we were doing it, and that is how a lot of us learned."

Wilson's experience with running the Tax Center the last three years paid dividends for all personnel who employed its services.

"That is a testament to the absolute ability to Master Sergeant Wilson in not only doing tax returns and doing them correctly but also to his leadership and management capabilities," said Maj. Jack Murphy, chief legal assistance attorney at Parris Island.

That leadership and experience led the center to make more of an impact on the lives of Depot personnel.

"We handled more taxpayers this year than we had in the previous years," said Wilson. "We also saved more people money this year than we had in previous years and the refunds were bigger than in previous years."

Offering services to the whole of the Tri-command area, the Tax Center made the largest impact on the youngest generation of service members, and according to Murphy, it was a mission objective for the center.

"E-5s and below were helped the most," said Wilson. "We served over 1000 E-5s and below

for the tax season with an average return of \$1,614.96."

Those refunds helped many service members to get ahead on financial obligations that some, like Matthews, have already put to good use, "I used it to pay bills."

The skills he acquired being a part of the tax center is something that will help him out after this fiscal year. As he now has a deeper understanding of the process and will be able to do his taxes after he gets out of the military.

That information Matthews now wields, is in following with what Wilson said he preached to the personnel who utilized the Tax Center this year.

"Anytime you can learn something different it will pay off," said Wilson. "The more you know the better off you are."

While Wilson is helping service members get their taxes in order, he also gives tax advice for the coming year.

"If they are getting \$2,000 and \$3,000 back, I tell them to set it up where they pay less taxes every month and they get more money in their pay," said Wilson. "Then at the end of the year they get less of a refund. Use your money wisely. After all it's your money. Use it, instead of letting the government use it."

Even after the Tax Center closed its doors, Wilson is still willingly giving of his time and knowledge to help service members in need.

"We are still open for those people that need it," said Wilson. "If they got busy and couldn't get it done or they didn't get their refunds, they can still call the number for the I.R.S. refund hotline, 1-800-829-1954. All you have to do is enter in your social security number and it will tell you if it has been paid or not paid and why."